



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Media Contacts: Joe DiLaura (DWD) 317-232-3396

Sue Honcharuk (IYI) 317-396-2729

Indiana schools join national drop-out prevention, workforce development program

INDIANAPOLIS. (April 17, 2007) -- Twelve Indiana high schools, including schools from Indianapolis, Fort Wayne and Gary, have joined a nationally recognized dropout prevention and postsecondary transition program for at-risk youth.

The schools have joined Jobs for America's Graduates, a national not-for-profit organization that seeks to keep students in school through graduation and to ensure their transition after high school into meaningful employment or postsecondary education. The program is now in more than 700 high schools across the country, which now reaches more than 35,000 students annually. The Indiana version of the program is known as JAG-Indiana.

"We're counting on Indiana's youth to play an important role in Indiana's comeback, so it's important they stay in, graduate from high school and learn the skills necessary to be successful in a quality job," said Governor Mitch Daniels.

Indiana schools joining the Jobs for America's Graduates, school corporation and city:

- Arsenal Tech High School, Indianapolis Public Schools, Indianapolis
- Northrup High School, Fort Wayne Community Schools, Fort Wayne
- Wayne High School, Fort Wayne Community Schools, Fort Wayne
- Northside High School, Fort Wayne Community Schools, Fort Wayne
- Elmhurst High School, Fort Wayne Community Schools, Fort Wayne
- East Chicago High School, School City of East Chicago, East Chicago
- William Wirt High School, Gary Community Schools, Gary
- Theodore Roosevelt High School, Gary Community Schools, Gary
- Lew Wallace High School, Gary Community Schools, Gary
- West Side High School, Gary Community Schools, Gary
- Marion High School, Marion Community Schools, Marion
- Eastern Greene High School, Eastern Greene Schools, Bloomfield

The twelve Indiana schools began participating in JAG during the current 2006-07 school year. Four additional schools are scheduled to join next school year. During the first year of operation, the program has provided targeted educational and workforce assistance to a core group of about 500 students who have been identified at risk of dropping out of school.

“We are quite impressed with the JAG model and its success in other states,” said Andrew Penca, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. “This program addresses two of our most daunting educational challenges: keeping at-risk youth in school and equipping them with the workplace skills of the 21st Century.”

The Department of Workforce Development is funding Indiana’s participation in the program.

Ken Smith, president of JAG stated, “The good news is that Jobs for America’s Graduates has demonstrated 25 years of consistent results. The bad news is that the challenges faced by young people are now greater than when we began the original JAG model in Delaware in 1979. We applaud Governor Daniels and state and school officials for recognizing that there is a cost-effective solution to keeping our at-risk young people in school.”

Utilizing school and business partnerships, the program provides special individualized and group instruction to 35 to 45 students per school designed to equip students with a minimum of 37 employment competencies. In addition, a variety of adult mentoring, guidance and counseling, leadership development and training and placement services are provided.

The program sets high goals and outcomes for participating schools, including a 90 percent graduation rate, 80 percent positive outcome rate and 60 percent full-time jobs rate. In 2005, while the nation’s average graduation rate was 68 percent, JAG students across the country graduated at an average rate of 91 percent. In 2006, JAG’s graduation rate was 92 percent.

In Indiana, the program has three goals: completion of a diploma or GED, attainment of employment skills and for graduates to remain employed full time after graduation.

“Early reports from participating schools are quite positive,” Penca said. “We’re hearing anecdotally that schools are reporting reduced absenteeism, improved grades, and fewer disciplinary referrals. One student said he goes to school because of JAG - it is about him, his future and what he can do about it. He feels a direct connection to improving his life. The one-on-one mentoring personalizes school for these students, making it relevant and important.”

The JAG Indiana program is a public-private partnership that brings together the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI), and the local school corporations which will be hosting the programs.

The program began in Delaware in 1979, and its first national board, formed in 1980, included then-Governor Pete DuPont, Vice President George H.W. Bush, former Vice President Walter Mondale, and five governors. Since then, the program has reached 29 other states, and has worked with over 500,000 students in its 25-plus years of existence.